tapol
British Campaign for the Defence of Political Prisoners and Human Rights in Indonesia

8a Treport Street, London SW18 2BP Tel.: 01-874 3262/9684

Honorary President: Lord Avebury; Honorary Treasurer: Tom Soper; Organising Secretary: Carmel Budiardjo

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Engo. Pires de Miranda,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Foreign Ministry,
Lisbon, Portugal

Dear Minister,

Following my letter to you of 10 November, TAPOL has been informed by your Embassy in London that, on 25 October, your Government instructed the Dutch Embassy in Jakarta to issue Portuguese passports to the four East Timorese students wishing to go to Portugal, and to purchase air tickets for their journey to Lisbon. We are very grateful for this assurance.

It was also conveyed to us that it now rests with the Indonesian authorities to issue exit visas to enable the students to leave Indonesia. May we respectfully urge you to consider that this is an unacceptable situation. In the first place, as we understand it, holders of EEC passports do not need entry visas to visit Indonesia and likewise do not need exit visas. This must surely apply to the four students who now hold Portuguese passports. Furthermore, the students are leaving Indonesia to evade persecution and are seeking political asylum, the very first request they made when they entered the Dutch Embassy. There surely can be no precedent for such an incongruous situation, where persons wishing to flee their country of persecution are dependent on the goodwill of the government of that country in order to be able to leave the country from which they are fleeing.

May we therefore suggest that, instead of waiting for the Indonesians to issue exit visas, you instruct the Dutch Embassy to deliver the passports and air-tickets to the four men without delay, and conduct them, under the Embassy's protection, to the airport for immediate departure to Lisbon. As we understand it, the Embassy knows where the men are resident and should have no difficulty in bringing them to the Embassy in order to deliver these documents and make these arrangements. We are extremely anxious about the safety of the four men, the longer they remain in Jakarta and at the mercy of the Indonesian authorities.

Your Counsellor at the London Embassy took great trouble to explain your Government's position to us, stressing that it was essential not to draw public attention to the present delicate situation, lest we jeopardise the students' safety. We respected his willingness to discuss the matter so fully with us and decided not to proceed with plans to send a delegation to your Embassy later this week. However, we do not agree that silent diplomacy is the best policy in the present circumstances. That may have been true while the students were under the protection of the Dutch Embassy, but now that they are at the mercy of the Indonesian authorities, having most regrettably

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been required by the Dutch Embassy to leave their premises, we feel that public concern is necessary in order to protect the students against arbitrary actions by the authorities in Jakarta.

Finally, we would like to stress that, in our view, the Dutch Embassy is responsible for having placed the students' in grave danger by insisting that they leave the Embassy premises. Had this not been done, the four East Timorese would certainly by now be within the safety of your borders. This leads us to believe that there must have been some private undertaking reached between Mr Hans van den Broek, the Dutch Foreign Minister, and his Indonesian counterpart, Dr Mochtar Kusumaatmaja, shortly before the students were told to leave the Embassy. We feel it is important to discover what were the terms of that agreement. We would be grateful for any light you can shed on this. We also intend to pursue this matter through our contacts in the Netherlands. We believe that the Dutch authorities must be made accountable for placing the students in the extremely difficult situation in which they are now placed.

Yours sincerely,

Carmel Budiardjo